

perceptions • feb. 16 • issue #884

# parashas tetzaveh



You shall make holy garments for your brother Aharon, for honor and glory. (Shemos 28:2)

AS RASHI EXPLAINED in last week's parsha, the Aron was comprised of three boxes, one within each other. The outer most box was made of a thin layer of gold, as was the innermost one. These two boxes sandwiched a thicker, inner box made of wood, which certainly made it lighter and easier to carry.

Lightness was probably an important consideration, but there was also an important lesson being taught by this construction. Everything about the Mishkan was a lesson about life and how to live it, and this was especially true when it came to the Aron.

Of the many lessons that the Aron taught, one was about who we are. The inner layer of gold represented the eternal soul. The outer layer of gold represented the need to project the reality of the INNER eternal soul on the OUTSIDE. Clothing to do not “make the man,” but they are a VERY good indicator of what kind of person is wearing them, projecting to the world how the wearer views himself.

The wood inside represented the body which, like wood, is transient and subject to decay. The very nature of the body should make a person humble, as Dovid HaM-elech often reflected in Tehillim. This is what the rabbis emphasized here:

Akavia ben Mahalalel would say: “Reflect upon three things and you will not come to the hands of transgression. Know from where you came, where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give a judgment and accounting. From where you came—from a putrid drop; where you are going—to a place of dust, maggots and worms; and before whom you are destined to give a judgment and accounting—before the supreme King of Kings, The Holy One, Blessed is He.” (Pirkei Avos 4:1)

The world has it all wrong. Billions of dollars are spent each year on clothing for the body, not the soul. Of course all clothing goes over the body, and covers it. But much of the clothing, especially the kinds that people spend a lot of money on, is designed to focus people on bodies, not souls. Instead of having their “wood” sandwiched by two layers of “gold,” they are two layers of “wood” on top of their layer of “gold.”

This parsha makes this point. It's talking about the kohanim, but the message applies to anyone seeking a meaningful life. It says:

You shall make holy garments for your brother Aharon, for honor and glory. (Shemos 28:2)

In everyday terms, this would simply mean make regal clothing, as befitting the spiritual leader of the Jewish nation. It had to be clothing that would impress upon him and the people that he held one of the highest and most important offices in the history of mankind. It had to be clothing that when worn, it helped the Kohen Gadol to never lose sight of his high ranking position.

In more Kabbalistic terms, the verse refers to clothing that reflected the Kohen Gadol's inner essence, his SOUL. There is nothing more honorable or glorious than the human soul, the essence of a person and their divine resemblance. The clothing a person wears is only honorable and glorious when it reflects this reality on the outside.

A similar concept is alluded to by the following verse:

All honor [awaits] the King's daughter who is within; her raiment is superior to settings of gold. (Tehillim 45:14)

All honor [awaits] the King's daughter who is within, etc.: Those who deserve all honor, and they are the nation of the King who behaved with modesty, now their garments will be more esteemed than the settings of gold of the High Priests. (Rashi)

Modesty is not one of man's fortes. God made mankind with an appealing appearance, and the ability to "appreciate" it. Consequently, people with limited spiritual awareness tend to cater to that appreciation, one way or another, and USUALLY at the cost of modesty. Countless billions of dollars are spent on an ongoing basis just to take advantage of all of this.

Modest behavior, whether we're talking about clothing or mannerisms, is a reflection of the extent to which a person's soul has a say in their direction in life. We all have ambitions, and some are so important to us that we feel as if we're missing out on life if they're not fulfilled. But the greatest ambition of all has to be, living a soul-led life. Though that may not fetch us the attention we crave in THIS world, it WILL get us the attention we will cherish in the NEXT one.

It's a hard call, evident by how confusing it can be even for those who purportedly service their souls over their bodies. But one hard and honest look into a mirror can reveal the truth, if not an actual mirror, then at least a spiritual one. "When I look at myself and how I live," we have to ask ourselves, "is it the honor and glory of my soul that I project, or that of my body?"

## CONNECTING THE DOTS, Issue #17

As I have mentioned in the past, I am VERY fascinated by the brain. Aside from being one of the most remarkable creations in the universe, it is where "we" reside. So, to know your brain, in many respects, is to know yourself,

and to me, there is little more exciting than self-knowledge.

Many people think that they have it, when in fact what they really have is just an inkling as to what they like or dislike. They don't know much about what it is that makes them like or dislike what they do. They don't think that it is that important to know that much about themselves.

However, studies show that people with increased self-awareness not only know themselves better, but they tend to stick to their values even when pressured. Knowing themselves better, they also know better how important it is to them to be true to their beliefs, and that of course is VERY important from a Torah perspective.

The downside of increased self-awareness is self-consciousness. The former does not have to lead to the latter, but often does. Hence, self-aware people tend to be more nervous when performing publicly, and may avoid it altogether.

The opposite is also true. Often the people who do not suffer from any performance anxiety, being totally not self-conscious, tend to lack in-depth self-awareness as well. Their downside is that though they can do a great job when having to perform in public, they tend to be unaware of other aspects of their behavior that ought to embarrass them, but doesn't.

Which is the better way? Obviously a balance between the two, self-awareness without too much self-consciousness. But, if that's not so likely, then I would choose great self-awareness, and suffer the effects of self-consciousness whenever they would come up. Public performances are not so frequent, and can even be avoided. But

life cannot be, and self-awareness just lets you enjoy it a lot more.

Many good things in life are a double-edged sword. The gain can be great, but there can also be difficult moments. For example, relationships are wonderful, until you lose them. Some people never quite recover from some losses but, as they say, “tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.”

The same can be said about anticipating the Final Redemption. If you allow yourself to be aware of it, and to be sensitive to what may be leading to it, then life is more meaningful, more historic, more biblical. I find that VERY exciting and fascinating. It’s a rewarding way to live, especially in Eretz Yisroel.

The downside, of course, is when things don’t pan out as hoped. It gets even worse when people say to you, “Nu, what happened to the redemption? Such and such didn’t lead to anything in the end! Who says that anything else will?” Sometimes you even hear YOURSELF asking the same question.

Nevertheless, it is what God prefers. The prophets said it, the Talmud says it, and Jewish history says it. We’re supposed to be redemption-oriented. We’re supposed to be super-aware that we’re in exile, so that we will live daily anticipating redemption. God does, so why shouldn’t we? Besides, the benefits of being this way greatly outweigh the negatives. And, not just in THIS world, but in the NEXT for sure.